

REWRITE



The Magazine of Effective Writing

Vol. XV No. 2.

JUNE, 1955.

Fifty cents

HOW DOES A WRITER GET STARTED?

The answer probably is—to write. Or better still, to write with a purpose. Everyone learns to walk in his own peculiar way. The main thing is to get going and end up a long ways ahead of where one started. How is not nearly as important as what and where a writer publishes. For some it may be a great deal, for others only a little, perhaps in a small or little known spot. Some of the best writers have died young, or left few traces of their gifts. One of the most remembered, Jesus of Nazareth, is known only by what his apostles and followers thought they heard & much later set down.

But getting started can even so be a terrifying and difficult process. There are as many ways as there are writers, and each of them is good, if it succeeds. But the principle need is to develop confidence and the ability to express one's self effectively & to have something to say that is worth listening to. Something the reader can remember and take away with him. I can still picture the number of first sheets I used to snatch from my typewriter, either to tear into bits or ball up and throw on the floor. It was years before I could build a springboard and make the plunge, with out some degree of penic. And even today it is possible to appreciate with distaste that the butterflies are not far away, when one tackles an important assignment. Most professionals react exactly the same way although they produce large amounts of excellent copy. Esther Forbes in a talk at Clark University the other day admitted ruefully she had sometimes thrown away a novel she had worked on for 3 years.

Newspaper work, however humble and pedestrian, is a good way of learning to assemble and organize facts. If I had to live over my experience again, I would choose my beginning job of reviewing plays for a morning paper. A midnight deadline for reviewing plays that do not drop their final curtain until, let's say, eleven plus, is rough for everyone. But it does make you get something onto paper quickly. It does teach you to do a better job each time, if only to save your own sense of shame. When you have worked up to top man on the string and have to have a column (1,200 words), you can at least do a writing assignment in a hurry. Then you can build up from there, seeking quality & significance. But you have to start somewhere.

Some writers start by writing fillers, or shooting at various types of contests. Some try juvenile magazines or confessions. Others graduate from advertising offices or do teaching, and thus learn to sell and expound ideas. Probably the greatest number of writers write on the side at night and on weekends or holidays. For years they study, and send out mss. Trial and error stuff. Without doubt this is sure to be the slowest and most discouraging way.

Money and time are factors that some folk place too high a value on at this stage. It is necessary for some persons to earn, nevertheless you must expect some waste efforts at this stage; some experimentation. You can't expect success to be certainly at the rainbow's end. Any tangible results are so much gold. Now is the time to find out your limitations; what you can & can't do. Now it is essential to be teachable, curious, and interested in building a basic core of all-around writing ability. Some writers do not, I would say, ever acquire a cornerstone, or develop the temperament suited to the hard, hazardous role of being writers. They want success to come too easily. They lack drive and persistence. They are unwilling to work and to build on a strong base of fundamentals, and to accumulate experience, that they use creatively and objectively.

Opportunity is the biggest thing when you are trying to break in. I have seen writers parley a give-away column in the local town newspaper into a chance to sell feature articles to nearby metropolitan Sunday "magazine" sections. I have seen writers of feature articles for juvenile magazines spread over into short stories, then work into the serial field. I have seen feature reporters on metropolitan papers get started in magazines and ultimately come up with books, or a column.

Radio columns, women's page fillers, garden material done on a give-away basis, often lead to better things. At a recent dinner of the Worcester Branch of the National League of American Pen Women one of the women who was being honored for publication of a book, explained how writing a local history led to orders for books about industries in the neighborhood: two big national manufacturing companies, a bank, etc. A local pageant has sometimes led to other dramatic productions, and then to different types of writing.

Verse contributions to paste-up newspaper columns have started many writers on to bigger things. Poets can work their way up into the poetry magazines, good paying poetry markets such as the N. Y. TIMES, N. Y. HERALD TRIBUNE, SAT. REVIEW, etc. Ultimately, a first class reputation and even books of poetry not vanity published. There are prizes, awards, fellowships, teaching and critical, or lecturing opportunities. The main thing, I think, is to work yourself forward. Mostly, you go from the small beginnings to a larger market or opportunity. And more than the great majority of readers and writers know, these opportunities come, often unexpectedly because the writer has built a reputation or a career. When openings come people just naturally think of the writer who has "done things."

Don't wait for opportunity to knock. Make it knock. Don't try to sell only one ms.

REWRITE

Published quarterly by
Writers' Counsel Service, 50 West Street,
Lunenburg, Mass.

SEE AND	William K. Harris,	KEEP
WRITE	Elva Ray Harris,	AMERICA
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WHAT FREEDOM MEANS TO THE WRITER

In publishing circles today you hear many responsible persons declare that the book is doomed. Other media will take over. I don't think so, because there is a personal relation between an author and his reader which no other form of artificial communication is yet able to create. Certainly not the movie or television. To settle down for a long evening with a good story or a man with ideas and experience, is something few people endowed with curiosity and a zest for living, would willingly give up.

But whether books be ultimately doomed or not, ideas and emotions, and man's need for them, will never die so long as he is a human creature. Not all of us are intended to be creators of deathless prose or verse. But each in our own unique way are capable of a worthwhile thought or expression of an emotion we have experienced. There is room for both a Homer or Shakespeare and Edgar Guest. We have the privilege, the opportunity, and the responsibility to seek out and write the truth as we see it, and most of all feel it.

Much lip service is being paid just now to liberty and freedom, especially "freedom of thought". That is a meaningless phrase, unless we try to understand both the opportunity and the responsibility it implies. The very basic secret of the gift of life is to

be found within the bud of its overtones. It surely does not encompass the right of individuals or groups large or small to dictate to their neighbors. Yet many of these, who are well meaning in their way, are decreasing, if not destroying, freedom of thought, by just such abuse of the basic cornerstones of our faith.

Writers and artists and professional folk hold perhaps the greatest opportunity & responsibility for holding straight the skirmish line of true freedom. For other men are apt to be too busy with the tasks of earning a living to be able to think deeply or creatively about long range values. Therefore, never overlook the fact that every writer is in a sense a trustee of the human race. His job whether he fashions entertainment or an idea destined for eternity, is to conserve, to alter and to create those imperishable ideas or truths, those comforting thoughts & sayings, and those good rich belly-laughs by which we manage to live.

It has been said that writing at best, is a lonely business. If by that you mean that a writer must perpetuate his thoughts alone and at frequent intervals take stock of the human from his lonely hilltop, which is not an imprisoning ivory tower, yes. But let us not forget that in writing more than in other professions, there exists a constant paradox. The writer must be both a non-conformist and one who continually celebrates that ideal of the human race, the ability of people to work well with people.

The writer who sits apart and thinks about life, will never be a true master of his art, trade, however you may consider it. Writers for the most part may not be great joiners. They must save their energy and the sense of perspective for their writing. But in a long and active life dedicated to writing, I have seen few writers who did not possess a strong enthusiasm for living. The great ones own a nice balance between an avid spectator and a player who can scarcely wait till he rushes out on the field of play. He enjoys his moments of observation, satisfying his curiosity, and his soaking up the strong emotions of great drama; but he is always eager to get it down on paper.

It is this self-adopted role of delegated witness, a personal witness if you will, for each member of the human race whom he maybe able to persuade to stop & listen, that sets great books apart from all of the mechanical media of communication. Despite all the vivid techniques, devices and tricks of movies, radio, television and even the spoken stage, there is nothing to compete with the sense of personal identification and enlargement of a private stockpile of emotional experience than reading what another man or woman has seen, and heard and felt, and has recorded in the eye-witness manner of one who has been personally involved. That is why the freedom we use as trustees is so important, so vital & carries such a burden of responsibility.

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HOW'S YOUR BATTING AVERAGE?

Here are acceptances reported since March:

Florence M. Davis

Short Stories: AMERICAN GIRL, TRAILS FOR JUNIORS, TRUE EXPERIENCE.

Serial: TWELVE/FIFTEEN.

Lillian Everts

Book of Poems: Farrar, Straus & Co.

Poems: EDUCATIONAL FORUM, NEW VOICES, N. Y. HERALD TRIBUNE (Sunday), Lewiston NEWS, Denver POST, and others.

Quentin R. Howard

Short Stories: The INSTRUCTOR.

Filler: READER'S DIGEST.

Essays: The Christian Science MONITOR.

Ina Blanchard Bates

Lenten Story: Brockton ENTERPRISE.

Julia Anna Cook

Poems: KALEIDOGRAPH, LANTERN, N. Y. TIMES AMERICAN WEAVE, Boston GLOBE.

Ella B. Flagg

Poems: Boston HERALD, Boston POST.

Mabel I. Huggins

Hymn Quiz: CHRISTIAN YOUTH.

Kathryn Wilson

Article: Hi. Fillers: WOMAN'S DAY, POPULAR MECHANICS.

Muriel D. Traegde

Juvenile Story: TRAILS FOR JUNIORS.

Sadie Fuller Seagrave

Poem: The STEPLADDER.

Avonne D. Ballin

Poems: Waukegan NEWS-SUN.

Helen Langworthy

Articles: Grand Rapids PRESS, BUILDERS, The APOSTLE.

Juvenile Stories: 'TEENS, VISION.

Dorothy Holman

Article: PROFITABLE HOBBIES.

Poem: Boston HERALD.

Marjorie Neagle

Light Verse: TOWN JOURNAL.

(Mrs. Neagle picked up an indirect idea we offered: namely that this magazine used light verse. On the first try, a check at the rate of \$1.50 per line!)

NOTE: Priscilla Brookman, 140 Church St., E., Brampton, Ont. Canada, would like to correspond with other writer interested in writing greeting card verse.

A number of small round robins, of this kind function among WCS Family members.

SOME NEWS, AND COMMENT ABOUT IT

The RURAL NEW YORKER, Persis Smith, Woman and Home Editor, 333 W. 30th St., NYC 1, offers a very small market for verse. Persis Smith gave Elva a personal and exclusive report on her specialized requirements & limitations in a friendly manner.

On March 10th she wrote: "We are already, a month and a week ahead, working on the April 19th issue. My spot for verse seldom accommodates more than some 8 to 12 lines at the most. Incidentally, that spot is precious, because of its small size and only 26 appearances in the year. (RNY is a bi-weekly.)

It makes "returning mss. hard, but a necessity. The seasonal material goes back immediately, so that the authors may try them elsewhere while they are yet timely."

In a later letter granting us permission, as indicated, to use this report, Mrs. Smith voiced eloquently the fear that bothers all editors, and motivates many of them in their seeming unwillingness to allow reports about their requirements to be published. (I know some who get so furious when writers' mag-list them in a general and unauthorized report, that they file a standing order stating they do not wish to be listed. Yet they do buy material from free lances.)

"The material you wish to use in REWRITE, in relation to "Woman and Home" mss., I shall be glad to have there. My only hesitation is that whenever a note for writers' guidance is used, I am flooded with material, in addition to my regular daily mss., and I always feel concerned for the hopeful contributors, who send me mss. I just must necessarily return. Space is such a precious thing on my pages, that I naturally do not begin to use or even hold on chance, much of what comes to me. That angle, however, you are familiar with."

We have used that paragraph to show you to what extent many editors think about your interests and are personally concerned.

Michigan State University, East Lansing., Mich. On July 1st, when this college takes its place as a university, it will also offer a new School of Communication Arts. Under Dean Gordon A. Sabine, formerly occupying the same position in the School of Journalism at the University of Oregon, the beginning will be made on a base of the depths of journalism and speech. Other aspects will be developed apparently. The Michigan Press Association sparked the origin of this high level school for writers.

REWRITE approves the trend toward regional professional schools for writers on a university level, because it cuts the ground out from under the mail-order correspondence schools selling courses of doubtful value to inexperienced writers. We at WCS always recommend college grade courses when we can. Of course Michigan has a great school of writing.

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FUNDAMENTALS OF GOOD POETRY

By Elva Ray Harris

THE POET'S WORKSHOP

The poem for discussion in June:

A POEM IS A MYSTIC LIGHT

By Bessie H. Hartling

A poem is a mystic light,
Gleaming distant through the night.
We seek it with a humble mind,
That in our heart its gleam may find
Words that speak our soul's command
To touch and heal; to understand
Our brother's need; the world's distress,
And errors that we must confess;
The rage of passion to be still,
Surrender of our personal will.

A poem is a mystic light,—
A star that beckons through the night.

This column is run like a workshop, where interested people sit down in one room, and help each other with their problems. Criticisms are made in a friendly spirit. We like to begin with what is good. It is so much easier to acknowledge and improve one's faults if one's virtues have been recognized in the first place. Poets need to become good critics, but must remain creative.

Grace Holliday Scott: (whose poem, "The Hidden One," we took apart last time.) "Those first two lines send me. I like the definition as well as any I've heard. The author has a fine fire of sincerity and an ease, a facility with words. And the thought is good, in fact, exceeds its mechanics. And that is better than if the reverse were true."

B. Coursin Black: "The poem itself catches a glimpse of the inner meanings of verse, the reflection of a glow, the cadence of something elusive."

Julia Anna Cook: "A fine poem idea."

Avonne D. Ballin: "A nice thought with good smooth rhythm."

Hylah R. Bender: "She brings out many truths in a few words."

Ella B. Flagg: "It is lovely and contains a very poetic thought. It conveys to a reader the fine spirit and ideals of the writer."

Mary A. Fallon: "It expresses the depth and sincerity of meaning in the 'mystic light' of poetry in a most thoughtful and beautifully expressed way. Its strength comes from those clear simple truths the author states."

Lily D. Pearce: "I like the poem because it is not mystic. It is very clearly expressed."
Lena Swan: "It is ocean-deep in import."

Jacqueline Tweton: "It describes what I feel can be the best purpose and valued quality of poetry or any other writing—enlightening or explaining some phase of humanity's difficulties."

Clarence O. Adams: "At first reading it has a touch of lightness that sings it way along, but subsequent readings bring a depth, and meaning that enriches it."

Several readers have put their fingers on the same fault.

B. Coursin Black: "I do not believe that Mrs. Hartling actually means what the words imply. The spirit of her intention is captured in the first two lines and the last two lines. The amplification of them leads astray."

Mary Alden Campbell: "The poem must be here in these 12 lines because one's first quick reading definitely impresses it on the mind. But how does it do this? Neither its logic, nor its workmanship can stand up under second and closer reading. Line 3: is 'it' a ready-written poem or is 'it' a desire here and now to write such a one? The latter surely, but 'seek it' does not say so. The idea is further confused by 'gleam may find', in line 4; lines 5, 6: 'words...to understand', and by line 9 which is out of construction."

"Line 10 does not tie up with any verb or a noun in the whole long sentence. The remedy lies in a rethinking by the poet of the real idea underlying this feeling—her way to expression."

Grace Holliday Scott: "How would it be if from line 3 it became a command, omitting 'we'?"

'Seek it with an humble mind
That in your heart its gleam may find'...

'an' humble mind is the more acceptable and easier to say. The second sentence is rather long and involved. . Does she perhaps mean, 'stilled' and 'surrendered' in 9 and 10? I find 'distant' to be an adjective, and while I'm not against experimental use of words to produce special meanings, I don't feel it's justified here. 'A distant gleaming' perhaps using gleaming as a noun and not as an infinitive, and then, too, the word 'gleam' is repeated in line 4."

Julia Anna Cook: "By eliminating the inversion in line 2, you could also get back the iambic; for instance:

'A distant glimmer in the night'

In line 5 the rhythm could be smoothed also

'Expression of our soul's command'

In line 8, I would suggest 'the' instead of 'and', and in line 7, a comma after 'need', assuming she means to understand both need, and distress.

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Ella B. Flagg: "Lines 9 & 10 aren't as clear in meaning to me as the rest of the poem... Are they supposed to be linked up with: 'to understand' in line 6? Line 10 doesn't seem quite as smooth as the others. Perhaps 'Surrender of our selfish will' would sound better. The poem promotes a feeling of quietness and peace which the words 'the rage of passion' belie. I think I would like to substitute 'the urge—nay, longing to be still'."

Hylah R. Bender: "I would change lines 8, 9 and 10 as follows:

'Admit our errors and confess:
The rage of passion then to still,
With surrendered personal will.'

Here are two comments that should be considered along with the preceding ones.

B. Coursin Black: "There is an admonition, I believe, that poetry must alleviate the woes of the world, must serve to help others. No matter how laudable the aims, poetry is not propaganda. Nor is it duty or obligation."

Lena Swan: "It seems to me that nearly all of the lines apply to prayer rather than to a poem. Yet the analogy is not complete, even from this standpoint."

Following are some comments concerning the rhyme and rhythm.

Mary Alden Campbell: "Revision would doubtless get the stress off at least five prepositions; would avoid repetition of long 'i' in rhyme words; would correct the sing-song meter, and really say what she wants to say the way she wants to say it."

Grace Holliday Scott: "The rhyme scheme, at the beginning in the first six rhymes, unless intentional linked, is a bit too close. The closing figure seems to me weaker than the opening one which should be vice versa. Stars remain in the sky but inspiration can come, actually, from all creation, so let the light be free or mystic."

Hylah R. Bender: "Repeating the last lines, leaves me in doubt as to whether it makes the poem stronger."

Avonne D. Ballin: "Such common rhyme schemes as 'light' and 'night' should be avoided whenever possible. Also, I was once told that you should never repeat your same rhyme scheme, not in the same poem."

Clarence C. Adams: "The rhythm and rhyme are good in this poem. I like the echo lines... They are a refrain."

Ella B. Flagg: "I like the couplet that closes the poem very much. A star so often seems to beckon and lead us on to higher attainments."

Mary A. Fallon: "The use of the opening line twice in the poem definitely impresses, and its repetition adds strength. I would not

change lines 1 and 11."

Concerning the title:

Mrs. Fallon again: "Would it hurt the poem, I wonder, to shorten the title? I like short titles, not expressed as a statement."

Jacqueline Tweton: "The title is a bit long."

Clarence C. Adams: "The title is not good. It should express the theme of the poem clearly, more clearly than it does. It seems that the author is suggesting that a poem can be 'A Challenge', or perhaps it is 'A Motivation'."

Ella B. Flagg: "I would prefer a different title instead of exactly the same words as the first line. How about 'What is a Poem?'"

Grace Holliday Scott: "The title tells too much and I have a preference for titles that add to the poem's meaning, if possible, rather than repeating; especially when it is repeated twice within the poem, making it an insistence rather than an arrest of attention. I have a peculiar suggestion, just 'A Poem' or maybe 'Beckoning Light'."

Regarding the comment that was made relative to getting the stress off the prepositions, I should like to point out that there are times when a poet can achieve a subtle variation by allowing a preposition to fall on a normally accented beat. There is such a variation in line 9. This is not a variation of time length. Rather it distributes the time differently within the line. One has to linger over the word "passion" in pronouncing it, because it is not a word that can be hurried. The rhythm slows just a little there, and picks up speed on the next two syllables "to the". In speaking that line we do not really accent the preposition. The fact that it is in the position of a stress but is not stressed, provides the variation.

In line 10 there is another kind of distribution of time. In reading we do not accent "of" which falls on a stressed beat. Actually, we hurry over it, which gives us time to put in the extra syllable in the last foot—"sonal will".

The prepositions "through" and "with" would be rather difficult to use on an unaccented beat because of the time it takes to say aloud their consonants.

In defense of the author, I disagree that the meter is sing-songy. Aside from the subtle variations, the use of the carry-over between lines 4 and 5, and the pauses in the middle of lines 6 and 7 help to keep the meter from becoming too regular.

About the rhyme, I agree that the rhyme-sounds in the first six lines are too closely related. The first four lines make use of the long "i" while the third to sixth lines use the same final consonants "nd". The po-

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em would be better if variation could be achieved in these rhyme sounds.

But I disagree that "light" and "night", a common rhyme, should not be used. If we are to throw out a rhyme scheme on grounds that it is trite, we are going to limit ourselves too much for the good of poetry. The test of a good rhyme should be whether or not it is inevitable. If you use the word which exactly expresses your meaning, and use it in the natural way, it will, nine times out of ten, not be noticed as being trite. A striving after originality, if too obvious, sometimes sticks out like a sore thumb and defeats its own purpose, where a more common rhyme would have faded into the background and left the reader's mind free to absorb the poet's message.

As for repeating the same rhyme words twice in the same poem, if this is done carelessly it is not good. But if it is done deliberately for an artistic reason, it can be effective. I think Mrs. Hartling is justified in repeating "light" and "night" here at the beginning and end of her poem. She is using it as a refrain to carry our minds back, to the beginning. She states again the premise "A Poem is a mystic light" and then goes on to add one final thought about it. Perhaps this final thought is not quite strong enough as one poet commented. I think that as Mrs. Hartling revises the rest of the poem using some of the ideas of the workshop members, an inevitable, forceful last line will come to her. Clarence O. Adams has made a suggestion that is worthy of mention: "Giving meaning to the night".

Concerning the body of the poem, I agree with the workshop members in general that it needs some straightening out and clarifying. It's a good idea to stick to the rules, unless you can improve on them, for sound construction in prose in general applies equally to verse. So often verse that doesn't use grammar and punctuation in the orthodox manner, becomes merely sloppy writing. A poet finds that the restrictions rhyme, rhythm & form impose often tempt him to disregard the rules of grammar and punctuation. But it is necessary to check that impulse unless one is sure he can achieve his effect better by departing from accepted standards. Sometimes, it is only a matter of trying a little harder, thinking the poem through a little more carefully, or laying it aside and tackling it again when you are fresh.

The following markets were suggested: The ARCHER, AM. BARD, C. S. MONITOR, The Hartford TIMES, religious or family magazines.. Grace Holliday Scott suggests that it would make a good opening poem for a collection of the poet's own work. After revision I would send it to any of the better verse publications.

SPECIAL NOTE: Deadline for comment on the next poem is Aug. 1st. We expect to be at Ocean Park Aug. 24th with REWRITE closed up!

The poem for discussion in September:

APPLE JEWELS

By Mary A. Fallon

Sapphires, rubies, emeralds and amethysts
Leap from the burning logs in flaming whips,
As amber tongues curl and lick the blazing
applewood.
But these are not flames that flicker and
die:
The sapphires are bluebirds there in the sky;
The rubies are red robins flying around;
The emeralds are leaves, and the grass on
the ground;
The amethysts come from the sun's last rays.
These jewels were all part of the apple tree's
days.
Now they glow in the beauty of burning fire,
More precious than those we seek in the
flame of desire,
As amber tongues curl and lick the blazing
applewood.

Mary A. Fallon is a beginner. "Apple Jewels" is the fourth poem she ever sent to any market, and the first one to be accepted. It came to REWRITE on its first trip. This poem was the result of the loss of a beautiful tree during the hurricane that followed the Maine Writers' Conference closely. Mrs. Fallon had attended, and it was partly the inspiration she received there that made her become interested in starting to write poems.

Deadline: Aug. 1st!

We pay \$1.00 for each poem used. Send in your poems and your comments, remembering to accompany each poem with a comment. That is the one rule of eligibility: to comment for the other fellow. This is a help-each-other Workshop. If you have no poem to send in, a comment will be appreciated anyway. The opinions of a number of people are valuable. They help the workshop poets to improve and make salable their work.

Don't forget the stamped, addressed envelope, if you want your ms. back. Whenever it's possible, I scribble a brief comment on rejected poems. We try to help writers all we can.

SOME BOOKS FOR POETS

MIAMI BEACH IN RHYME. Irving Ziemer. Meador Publishing Co. \$2.75. By a good friend of us three, this book is just what the title implies, a revealing picture of Miami Beach in rhyme.

HUMOROUS POETRY FOR CHILDREN. Ed. Wm. Cole. The World Publishing Co. \$3.50. Written by poets past and present, it will be enjoyed equally by adults. Much of it was first done for them. Which explains why a few seem out of place.

FROM SEA TO SEA IN SONG. Ed. Rita Josephson Murphy. 1954 yearbook of the American Poetry League. Members' poems. A useful market guide.

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DIRECT REPORTS ON MARKETS

MATURE YEARS, John W. Cook, 810 Broadway, Nashville 2, Tenn., has sent us sample copies of the new Methodist older young peoples magazine. Commenting, he wrote: "As you can see, we try to cover a wide range of interests. We welcome unsolicited material, but seldom print anything over 1,200 words, unless it is a story which may run up to 2,000 words."

This is not a free invitation for writers to send anything they may happen to have on hand or poor quality stuff. The Methodists, in the field of juvenile publications, have long held to a high standard of editing, so high that many smaller denominations obtain some of their materials from this source. A result of this is the system of small royalty payments that successful writers receive in addition to the substantial first payment following acceptance. Therefore, it is wise to study the book carefully and send only a first rate ms. to the editors of such magazines as this one and TWELVE/FIFTEEN, CLASSMATE, etc.

The **SOUTHERN FARM & HOME**, Vivian Thomas, editor, Montgomery, Ala., has "discontinued the use of fiction." A member of the **WCSF** family also volunteers the information that in spite of this, she got a slow report on fiction.

VERMONT LIFE, Walter Hard, Jr., Development Commission, Montpelier, Vt., is not an open market. In response to an inquiry, the editor wrote to us: "Frankly, we have found that listings in writers' publications don't prove much of a help to us or to free lancers. The reason is we have such a carefully calculated subject line and the need for tie-in photography is so great, that even looking at the magazine, a writer almost never is able to do anything for us unless he is, at the very least, a part-time resident of the State, and after preliminary discussion. The greatest part of our material is conceived, as a result, here, and then farmed out to a writer who is available."

Mr. Hard's letter hints at the reason why many editors side-step being listed in professional magazines for writers: (1) many of the listings do not accurately reflect current needs, being merely pasted up from the past issues of the writers' magazines; (2) they are hastily and unthoughtfully digested by inexperienced writers, who rush improper material into an envelop and throw it, like buckshot, at the editor's head. (3) editors as a result are so angry at the time wasted by futile reading, they refuse to be listed again.

The point is that editors and writers are not persons arrayed against each other on a field of battle; each side is human. Whoever on either side is selfish or inconsiderate, naturally hurts himself as well as the other side. Both are people working together.

DO YOU PROJECT EMOTION?

One of the things many inexperienced fiction writers overlook is the need to put emotion into a story. Projected emotion that the reader feels as if it were his own, and as if he were living the experience of an MC right in the living present of his own life here and now, not in some distant time or in some far off place. Years ago when **COLLIER'S** fiction editor was Kenneth Littauer, he remarked once that "a short story is considered to be an emotional experience."

I was reminded of this recently in advising two writers. One submitted a historical short story, the other a space-ship account of the invasion of another planet by an armed force from this world. Now although this may seem like two very different extremes—a basic similarity existed. Both writers in a sense faced the same problem. And one overcame the problem, the other did not.

The author of the historical story pulled a series of historical incidents together in a thinly unified chain. It was history, not the story of what the MC, a young girl, actually experienced. The incidents were "illustrative" of the time and place in history, not the inevitable happenings that this little girl lived because she was the child the author had imagined. The reader did not

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A CONTROVERSY: A REPORT FROM ENGLAND

This is the comment made by Marous S. Crouch in the April issue of the magazine about junior books and readers, **THE HORN BOOK**.

No report on the year could omit a reluctant reference to that strange modern phenomenon, the "Career" book. A year or two ago librarians readily said that they wanted stories which gave an authentic view of first experiences in the professions. Their wish has been granted in the excessive degree characteristic of the methods of the more malignant fancies. "Career" books have flooded the market. They have nearly all been accurate and well intended; they have uniformly lacked charm, invention and a real driving purpose, and they demonstrate convincingly the axiom that the good children's book is not written to order.

It is an opinion often expressed in this country after the first enthusiasm for the new idea wore off. **REWRITE** has reported it on several occasions for you. We do not believe that books about new careers or old ones cannot be written effectively. But the author's first enthusiasm must be to tell an interesting and exciting story.

You do not permit a novel background to be the dominating interest. Then why should you allow careers to take over? To do so creates the same mistake as to use "illustrative action" that makes the characters prove something the author wishes to put over. In other words, to pull the strings on the imaginary characters (the marionettes), not to allow the real people you bring alive, to live their lives with the complete illusion of a compelling reality.

Your first task is to tell a story and in doing so to create a little world of illusion that is so real the reader says to himself, "Life is like this," not, "This is as real as life." Never let it be "phony".

REWRITE

CLARK UNIVERSITY WRITERS' CONFERENCE

Plans for the 1st Annual Clark University Writers' Conference have progressed considerably since the March issue. There will be an opening get together on July 14th with a speaker and a social hour for the staff and conferees to meet. On Friday and Saturday a group of three simultaneous workshops, at 9 A.M., and three more at 2 P.M. will function. Short Story, Poetry and Feature Articles are to be the morning subjects; Juvenile Fiction, Non-Fiction (books and the development of ideas), and TV Writing will be the afternoon topics.

At 11 A.M. each day the whole conference-group will assemble for a single workshop. A discussion from the Editor's Viewpoint will be featured on Friday, the Writer's and Literary Agent's Viewpoints will be discussed on Saturday. We hope to have Geraldine Rhoads, former editor of TODAY'S WOMAN, and working now as an editor on Special Projects for The Reader's Digest, as a featured specialist on both days. But Adelaide Field, editor of the children's magazine, CHILD LIFE, and the editor of the Maine State Federation of Women's Clubs Magazine, Doris Marston, will also be speakers on Friday. And on Saturday, Marion Saunders, agent for the very popular novel, "The Egyptian", Mabel Brown Farwell, slick-short story and serial writer, and probably Mr. A. S. Burack, publisher of The Writer & Plays, will share with Miss Rhoads in talking about various matters from their special points of view and varied experience.

We are fortunate to have Allene Corliss, a writer of short stories and many slick serials to lead the Short Story Workshop. Elva Ray Harris will lead Poetry on Friday, while John Holmes, poet and professor at Tufts is to lead on Saturday. Ivan Sandrof, Worcester TELEGRAM Feature Parade reporter, will be in charge of both Feature Articles and TV, & he is promising some surprise personalities to assist him in the latter workshop. Leader in the Juvenile Fiction Workshop will be Eleanore M. Jewett, author of a number of exceedingly fine books, one a Junior Literary Guild Selection. She is also a member of the WCS Family and has taught writing. David O. Woodbury, author of "Atoms for Peace", long time writer on science and humor for a host of magazines including The Reader's Digest, COLLIER'S and other large circulation books, will lead the longer non-fiction workshop.

Elinor Hughes, Boston HERALD dramatic critic, Alton Hall Blackington, very popular on New England's Yankee Network for his "Yankee Yarns" and author of a like-named book, will be evening speakers. Mr. Woodbury will also speak on Saturday evening.

Most of the workshop leaders will read and comment on a few in the workshops or be available for a limited number of individual conferences. Bill will help in this, too. For registration or inquiries, write: William E. Harris, dir., 50 West St., Lunenburg, Mass.

THREE MORE WRITERS' CONFERENCES

The Maine Writers' Conference, Dan Kelly, dir., 37 Stone St., Augusta, Me. There is a correction on dates. Preliminary publicity, it appears, should have specified the dates as Aug. 24-26th, the same week as last year. Henry Beston, a distinguished author, is to be the featured speaker. Poet and writer on subjects close to nature and country living, he is something you don't want to miss. The rest of the old gang, including Dan, Richard Merrifield, former editor of YANKEE, Loring Williams, founder of the Conference, Doris Marston, Louise Darcy, David O. Woodbury, & Bill and Elva (and Billy) will be back. It's a friendly and congenial atmosphere, in the pine grove by the sea.

Registrations are in the form of an admission fee. Better notify Dan or Adelbert Jakeman, year around manager of the Conference's campus. For hotel accommodations, write: The Ocean Park Hotel, Ocean Park, Maine. (Scene of a religious summer conference, this Conference for writers is informal, intensive, and very inexpensive.

The Philadelphia Regional Writers' Conference, Box 897, Phila. 5, Pa. Hotel accommodations: The Bellevue-Stratford, Phila. 2, Pa. Still time to plan on this big, friendly and exciting conference. Bill and Elva will be there. I am serving as Literary Consultant. You can discuss your problems with me, or Elva.

The League of Vermont Writers Summer Institute, Mary Pearl, sec., 58 DeForest Road, Burlington, Vt. This a friendly annual get-together, Vermont and out-of-state writers. Stimulating talks, some workshops & lots of good shoptalk. Elva and I have been up there twice with pleasure. It's inexpensive, too.

VERMONT LIFE (See: P. 7.) In a recent letter to me Mr. Hard pointed out one small opening in his magazine for free lances. He wrote: "There is one field, on reflections, where free lancers might work advantageously. I refer to short factual articles on forgotten Vermonters of note, or especially one or another little-known oddities in Vermont history. I frankly think I have heard of all of them, but maybe not. But this would be a type of thing a free lance writer might occasionally come across in other research."

Every experienced writer can remember the tangential or by-product bits he has come across, and often cast aside. It is difficult to re-orient one's self when enthused about one of them, so as to think in terms of another market. But these sparks often are profitable as fillers. They can even suggest an important novel or book that cries to be attempted. Some of a writer's best work is developed in this way. Ideas generate ideas.

Also, when an editor tells you like this, that he is a tough nut to crack, he offers, and invites, a challenge worth picking up.

REWRITE

HOW TO HANDLE THIS PESKY PROBLEM

One of the never ending problems connected with writing is that of the editor, whom you all know, who attaches clips to a fresh ms. when he rejects it. Thus forcing you to retype it before resubmitting elsewhere. In defense of editors before I attempt to make some kind of an answer, let me say that the great majority of editors, and an even larger percentage of assistant editors, readers and so on, simply do not realize that putting clips on to mss. is a heinous crime. In my opinion, this is because the clips serve a useful purpose, and because not being authors, they have never thought through this problem from your angle.

Secondly, in a good many instances I know that these clips and, more especially, poor refolding and rumpling is done not by editors personally, but by mailing clerks whose job it is between other jobs, to return the hundreds of rejected mss. in each day's pile. Possibly you should be happy that in only a few editorial offices do they employ staplers and time-stamps! Actually, I believe in many cases it is easy for writers to be over-scrupulous about having a ms. starched & without a wrinkle. Editors as well as authors know that present-day postal procedures will almost surely lessen the pristine condition even before a ms. arrives in the editorial office.

Thirdly, while some editors are willing to pay a premium for a "first look," most have enough realism in the make-up not to be offended if a well typed, readable ms. doesn't stand up under a microscopic inspection to the fiction of never having been submitted, in its previous history, to any other editor. The point is that editorial offices are work rooms, not museums. And editors buy an interesting, valuable ms. for publication—not for display under glass.

But now let us return to the editors that writers can rightfully hate with their guts because mss. come back looking as if they'd been read in a stable. If you honestly have a grievance, instead of writing hot letters to a writers' magazine, the thing to do, in my opinion, is to write a friendly, reasonable letter to the top editor on the "masthead" of the magazine, or whomever you know is in a responsible position. Tell him that you think you have a case, and that you are interested in helping his office to improve public relations with its readers and writers.

I have known editors to respond by offering to pay the costs of retyping large mss. They also give their office force a good bawling out without disclosing your identity. My mother had a saying that if you wanted good service, you had to expect and demand it. A lot of truth in that. Give it yourself, and then show editors where they fall in giving it. They will have more respect for you, if you respect yourself.

Continued from P. 3.

ing at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, endowed by a successful Broadway playwright about 25 years ago, it has graduated a number of professionally able writers. While Harvard with its pioneer 47 Workshop course in playwriting persistently sidestepped any recognition of writing in any form except as literature out of the past, Yale, Carnegie Tech., Michigan, etc. picked up the ball and scored touchdown after touchdown. For where would the other arts, professions and businesses be if they could not communicate, or have means of learning from the present and past? It is one of the strange ironies in the academic world that Harvard rather grudgingly permitted itself to accept its now great Nieman Foundation, and that most of this university's distinguished practitioners and teachers of writing have had to go elsewhere to exercise their talents. Harvard took not the slightest notice of Thomas Wolfe & Philip Barry while they spent three years at the University hammering out the craftmanship, which was to carry them to the heights as a notable novelist and dramatist respectively!

Continued from P. 7.

feel strongly or very much care about the events because the author did not go beyond a good research job. She created the historical background, but not the characters & the story.

Now the science fiction writer did a very nice job of using his material to create an unusual effect on the reader. He had a surge to satirize the idea of war. So, he deliberately threw his story partly out of realistic focus. He had a world army conquer a planet & act in the manner of Hitler's legions. Then he invented a race with the superior wisdom and perspective enabling it to face such an awful catastrophe not with arms and desperation, but with humor and confidence in the superiority of its own position. The attacking hordes were so bewildered by an army, & a people that would not fight, they disintegrated before people sharing the same individual ambitions and fears as themselves. A death and resurrection occurred. The men of the world saw the ridiculousness of war and asked to be taught the wisdom of the people from the outer planet.

Impossible? Perhaps, but possible and acceptable while the magic of the story-teller held us. Because it followed a dream and a hope of the human race. And the author as a creative thinker had skilfully detached a controversial subject from most of its real life tensions. In a sense he told a parable that his readers could digest without heat. But most of all, he told a moving, exciting story that gripped the reader because under certain conditions it could be true. And he himself, the author, felt strongly about an idea he felt was important. Feeling so, and keeping himself out of it, he made his people live it. He did not tell it, or move them about like puppets. His world became real in terms of ideas and emotions. It came alive.

REWRITE

ESTHER FORBES TALKS ABOUT THE NOVEL

The high point of the spring meeting of the Wachusett Library Group was a talk by Esther Forbes. Leading off with an admission she has difficulty reading her own notes & following this with the story about the elderly woman who did not know what she thought, until she heard what she said, Esther nonetheless gave an eloquent talk on fiction. She attacked the current fallacy that one shows more signs of intelligence when he reads in the factual field than in fiction.

Her own test of a book's worth to her being whether it is "readable", she questions the present aspersions of fiction as "escape material". Escape to what? she asked scornfully. The real point is what does the reader bring back with him—a maturer outlook, a widened vision, or a correct set of answers to the latest quiz-game? The novel, she declared is an art form, and all of us can do with some of that in our lives.

The novel is often merely photographic in its net results. It looks like journalism & really isn't. She deplored a number of best selling novels about World War II as being in this class. The readable novel at its best, she defined as offering us digested human experience. She quoted John Hersey at considerable length. She recalled his saying that truth is often stranger than fiction, but fiction can be stronger and serve as a clarifying agent. Its real purpose is not to illumine events, but the human beings caught up, and trapped in them.

Journalism, according to Hersey, witnesses history, but fiction allows a reader the opportunity to live it. People in explaining, and serving as witnesses to events very often give the wrong explanation. Fiction on the other hand somehow manages to know more and be wiser. The author begins at the very beginning. He knows more and has a wider perspective. He is master of the overtones and subtler implications. He has greater understanding and, often, compassion than people who have lived an experience.

These thoughts led Esther quite naturally to the problem of fictionalized biography & her own great example of it, her remarkable recreation of the world of Paul Revere. The biggest danger, she said, is that one finds he is working on the outside. She continually developed fixed impressions of him, only to find that he did the unexpected. As when he was away, dancing a horn-pipe when Sarah, his wife, was about to have a child.

This kind of novel is hard to sell. Publishers are afraid of fictionalized character portraits because they don't know whether to classify them as fiction or biography. She gave an example of a book published when she was an editor at Houghton Mifflin Co. It was right on the line. The firm hesitated & appeared surprised when it sold quite well. Many books suffer this fate.

Esther's rough definition of the novel is "a story about people in action." Returning to her theme of fiction's equal standing beside factual writing, she said that for her such a novel is at least as important as an article on how to attach wallboard on walls, and possibly it is more interesting.

Basically, she thinks, there is a moral issue in almost every novel. And she believes that one of the weaknesses in modern novels is that the current crop of authors too often refuse to take sides, or to make important decisions. The inference she left circulating in the minds of her listeners, apparently, is that there is a certain artistic value in an occasional story similar to "The Lady or the Tiger", which puts it up to the reader to decide the problem. But as a creator of the "clarifying agent" which she termed the novel, Esther Forbes expects the novelists she reads to accept the responsibility and the consequences of standing up, and being counted on one side or the other.

Summing up, she stated her belief that no first class novel can be written that fails to touch upon morality of a high order. The importance and sanctity of the individual is the special privilege and creative opportunity of the novel. She pointed out that the art form as such is of comparatively recent origin. (The Homeric epics, though composed in verse and originally sung or told aloud, might possibly have served as a fore-runner. Ed.)

Miss Forbes pointed out that the novel as such would have been impossible in the Middle Ages, when a feudal and autocratic society alone existed. She told of a discussion she had recently with a young French critic following World War II, in which basing his opinions upon European conditions immediately after the War, he declared that the novel was doomed because of the universality of mass suffering, and the inability or unwillingness of the world generally to react, or respond, with any thing but apathy.

Esther disagreed with this pessimistic outlook. She believes that the world in general and America in particular still is greatly concerned about the sanctity of the individual. More concerned than it shows on the surface. Esther stated that if human beings ever attach more importance to a Soc. Sec. & dog tag number, then she believes the novel may be doomed. But she qualifies this fear. In spite of official affirmations to the contrary, she declared there were no first class novels written in Hitler's Germany, and likewise in Russia since the Revolution.

Finally, defining by implication what she means by "first class", she said she came upon a scene in the writings of Jane Austen in which a servant girl mourned the loss of the chain that prevented her from wearing a favorite locket. For Esther this scene was more moving than the climactic scenes of "The Robe" through which she yawned. The author felt it.

REWRITE

She warned that in documenting one's story a good rule to keep in mind is that people are always more important than statistics. Make readers feel and care. The sight or sound of one child dying before one's eye actually or figuratively is more terrifying and a greater lesson than the most poignant safety message.

Esther quoted Thomas Wolfe as saying that we like most and are most moved by the story we feel is related to our personal lives and which we can understand. She added that in writing for children many authors try to give their readers too many facts. As a child she was forced to learn many useless facts, for which she never found any use. Imagination and sympathy, she believes, can be just as easily taught. (Imagination and sympathy and understanding, which is made up of compassion and interest in both the particular and the general, the personal or individual and the abstract, are virtues too many writers as well as teachers lack. Without them, neither teachers nor writers can effectively function. So if you have any of these or assiduously cultivate them, you will be reducing one rejection potential in the highly competitive race for editorial commendation. Ed.)

Esther closed with the amusing remembered idea that man first loses his love of poetry, then of fiction, still later of facts & reading, until at last he is reduced to the financial and obituary pages of his newspaper and the telephone book...It was a witty, and entertaining, and at the same time wise and inspiring talk that Esther gave us.

WRITERS LOSE A GOOD FRIEND

It is with deep regret that we learned of the death of Cecile Bonham. She was my dinner partner at the head table at the Philadelphia Regional Writers' Conference some 4 years ago. She spoke warmly of Poets' Haven which she founded to help handicapped shut-in writers. She travelled widely and always paused wherever possible to visit and cheer these creative souls. Her acquaintance with them was legion. She will be greatly missed in many far flung places. All of us must be inspired by her gift for friendship and not fail to remember the fine example she set.

AN ARTISTIC EXPERIMENT AND A MORAL

A commendable experiment is being put into operation this month by Alfred A. Knopf, the book publisher. He is issuing "Mine Boy" by Peter Abraham, a relatively new writer, as a paperback novel, at the nominal price of \$1.25. If it attracts a small volume and builds a sufficient base of readers, a hard cover edition will follow. Mr. Knopf's theory is that the "new, or relatively unknown, writer needs, above all, readers." Present-day costs make it almost prohibitive for the courageous reader and the new writer to get a break. So, more new techniques like Mr. K's are needed. It would reduce the appeal of the

vanity printers who lay false claim to being publishers and take advantage of gullible & some inexperienced writers. If more publishers of Mr. Knopf's stature would experiment with new methods of developing the promising younger writers, and at the same time selling the idea of "courageous" readers, there would be more profit for everyone in hard & soft cover book publishing. As Esther Forbes implied in her talk, too much of the advertising and editorial effort goes into turning out neatly typed books that can be sold as history, romance, murder, etc. Never as a fine all around enchanting and mature story. A book salesman's highest recommendation to a book store or the ultimate reader is that "this book is a humdinger. It is better than 'Gone With the Wind'!" (Or, "It is like some thing Somerset Maugham wrote.")

The defense most publishers offer is that that is the only way you can merchandise any book successfully. But of course someone is always behind the development of a new type or novel trend. And readers want more of the same simply because that is what publishers keep dinning into their heads is the Thing, that the Jones read and that is expected of every mature and intelligent reader. It is a vicious circle, just as in the automobile industry. There the tremendous pressures of fabulous capital outlay for assembly-lines, and large production, have seduced the manufacturers into selling souped up and unfunctionally efficient models. They think it will be easier to sell the customer Style & Power than comfort, convenience and mechanical soundness. Cars have become beautiful, lethal weapons with which a large section of the population should never be trusted. And the public wants this type of dangerous but essential form of transportation, because advertising, glib, greedy and immoral, has extolled its virtues, but not its weaknesses.

Writers should learn a lesson from all of this. Basically, every time you write, even the most inconsequential "little piece," you are unconsciously facing and making a moral decision. Whether to try to "buy money" (by selling readers what you think they want and to heck with the consequences to them or to you,) or to struggle till you find a market for the ideas and the skills you believe in.

For good or bad, fundamentally the world we live in operates on a moral basis. The ideals many of us would like to see triumph in the fairy tales, may not always come out on top. But in the long run decency & faith do prevail. Without moral order civilization would, and has in the past, quickly crumbled. That is why REWRITE, recognizing the imperfect state of publishing, nevertheless over the year wages an unending and perhaps a rear-guard fight against vanity publishing. Why we commend any experiment however small or temporary such as Mr. Knopf's, that is a step in the right direction. Why we continue to point out real progress can only be achieved by the help of "courageous readers" and writers who care and write from the heart.

REWRITE

"IT COULDN'T HAPPEN TO HIM"

Within the space of ten days two big name authors whose by-lines are familiar to many readers, have told me in confidence identical stories about a ms. that has been kicked back to them by editors. Both writers are long established, one in the book field, the other in very popular magazines. Naturally, my lips are sealed as to their identities & the type of writing they do.

But it seemed to Elva and me that readers of REWRITE might feel encouraged to know even those whose names are well publicized on magazine covers and in columns of book news, have their bad moments. Our memories carried us back to the story Isabelle Moore permitted us to run several years ago, about a story she wrote for and sold to TODAY'S WOMAN after she had rewritten it 22 times! It was even then not finished in a way to satisfy—completely either her or the editors. They each settled for a compromise.

All of which proves my contention that as you work your way up to the higher brackets and the more expensive writing, your craftsmanship must develop, and your satisfying of the editors and readers increasingly resembles the tailored rather than the ready-made suit. Perhaps you do not follow that hollow maxim so often quoted by superficial authorities: "You do not write, you rewrite." But you have to know your markets and the readers' interests. You have to be constantly alert to whether you are just writing or doing an imaginative and creative job. Success can lull and trap your sensibilities. A writer can never let his agent or his editors do his work for him. That's something a hard pressed inexperienced or unknown writer rarely realizes. He thinks, oh, if I only had an agent, or the editors knew me! That isn't the way it works for the big ones.

The only real competition you have is you yourself. The thing you sell in the last analysis is your own uniqueness shaped to be valuable to an editor. So find & satisfy him

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back copies instead of forwarding them, and charges us return postage, it also takes an appreciable time to advise us of the new address. "Let each do his part" is right!

The March issue of POETRY announced on the front cover that the Ford Foundation is presenting copies to public libraries. Good!

The box on the left expresses our feeling exactly. We enjoy doing our part in getting REWRITE to you on time. We often change addresses on the very day an issue goes out!

But we can't change addresses we have not been told. The Post Office not only sends

A SMALL MARKET, AND SOME COMMENTS

SUNSHINE, Henry F. Heinrichs, The Sunshine Press, Litchfield, Ill., is an inspirational magazine that also is in part a showcase of the work of the press which publishes it. It uses one or two rather short stories every issue (monthly), an article or two, and some verse. Quite a good deal of filler and reprint material is also used. It pays, and it has the pleasant habit of using a by-line and the author's address, inviting comments from the readers for the benefit of the author.

CHANGING TIMES, the Kiplinger magazine, a \$6 per year supplement to this business commentator's news service, had an article regarding the possibilities of being a writer. (March, 1954.) Pretty good on the whole. Not like a come-on piece about tv that a writer showed us recently.

It listed Imagination, Logic (clear, well organized thinking), Vitality, Integrity, & Persistence as the traits most likely for a successful career. It said that good courses make you do three things: (1) study contrast between good and poor writing; (2) write; & (3) learn from good criticism of your work.

The one weak link was in the statement "no school can make you a writer in six easy lessons. It takes endless practice...however.. the better schools can be tremendously helpful." The first two sentences are unequivocally true. But the third? What are the best schools, or even better? Certainly they are not the ones that advertise widely; nor the critic-agents with mail-order courses. Nor even all the creative writing courses of university or college level, though they are a better bet. It takes a man or woman knowing writing from practical experience, and a good teacher into the bargain. These are of course rare. And one who can help one man is apt to be the next person's poison. You can only teach, however good you may be, the man whose eyes have begun to open with the light of understanding. Such generalizations have danger written all over them. They need, of course, to be backed by definitions and criteria of what is good.

Here is a thought a lot of writers should translate in terms of their own experience. Every writer ought to be constantly alert & spot the useless, the superfluous or worthless words that don't carry their weight in to a sentence. You are all aware of typical sentences that have useless words stretching one after another before the first key word that conveys meaning, real meaning or over-tone to the reader. Readers hate that sort of entertainment. They yawn, lose interest and discard it. You should test yourself at frequent intervals. And tighten your style.

SURPLUS WORDS

If all the words we've ever said
Were heaped into one great big pile,
And then we had to go to work
And sort out ones that are worth
while—
All others to be tossed aside—
I wonder, when the job is done,
If we might find the rubbish pile
Would be by far the larger one.

Tucson, Oregon. —W. Taylor Cooper.

REWRITE

SO, THE RULES OF WRITING ARE FLEXIBLE

The other day I told a juvenile writer of fiction that I did not think it wise to allow animal characters to act like human beings. At least to the extent of driving automobiles, pulling fire alarms, etc. Quite reasonably, she cited to me actual examples of published stories in which authors think they have done a cute job by making animals resemble as closely as possible human characters.

Now it is idle to say that most editors & librarians, and quite a few persons who are parents, do not think that is good teaching or good story-telling. If only because it's giving children an erroneous picture of the world they have got to live in. The point is there are two sides to the argument, and the fact that a small minority of very popular stories written for the uncritical and thoughtless readers (adult) who buy most of the books for very young readers, break the "rules," can never be wholly explained away. Inexperienced writers will say, "if they do it and can get away with it, why can't I?"

Even in the classics there is this divided world of fantasy and imaginative realism that bothers those of us who want to be the best teachers and advisers of writers possible. "Peter Rabbit" is very close to ideal in its handling of realism. It is written as a rabbit would see and hear and feel. But it is parallel to the life of a little boy. It is written in terms of a child's experience. A child can understand and sympathize with Peter because their worlds are similar but not identical. In after years he remembers the story and loves it because it told him good things, a moral that never was obvious. It opened his eyes to the world that was young and fresh, but more complicated, a serious and sometimes frightening world. He could identify with Peter, yet as he matured he could look back and see that he never was wholly Peter; he had a perspective that Peter lacked. That is the secret of all the great story-tellers. They let you share the experience, but beyond compassion, they reveal life and open your eyes.

Now let us look at the other side. Felix Salten wrote another classic in "Bambi," the story of a little deer. He has broken a lot of the "rules" of proper story-telling. He lets the deer speak to each other as only a group of humans would. He has scenes animal experts would ridicule as impossible. But just as Walt Disney in a cheaper, more obvious way has picked up the language of poetry and invested his unreal world with glamor and charm, so Mr. Salten has chosen to be imaginative. The total effect of his story, even to the very critical is one of sympathy and truth. Again, the story-teller has made it possible to feel like a deer, and to understand another's joy and pain. Match up a story by Ernest Seton-Thompson, the celebrated student of animals, with "Bambi", and you

will find they are not too far apart. They make the same comments about animals, namely that the world is full of those who love and those who prey; that the lives of all animals are over-hungat all times with danger, and fraught at the end with tragedy, despair and hunger, not to mention the frustrations of old age.

But let us get back to the "rules", under which writers move, and by which they think they are continually plagued. First, let me say that there are no secret formulae, that if one knows them lead on to immediate, easy success. Wherever writers gather you'll hear sooner or later mention of the slick formula, the men's formula, or the science fiction formula. Don't be fooled! There is only one formula and that is created by the necessity of communicating effectively to your reader.

You must have a subject, preferably a human being or a character of some sort. That personality must be facing a problem and eventually a decision. Through doubt and the resulting conflict between two alternatives the MC comes to a resolution of his "fix". Or he battles the forces arrayed against him and works out a satisfactory result, if not a glorious victory. Just as there is night & day, light and darkness, good and evil, so there is the positive and the negative, the two forces pushing against each other. The tide flows in and out. Change or lack of it are equally dramatic.

But these are fundamentals, not formulae. And they are the basis of all rules. We use only one MC, or one hero, one heroine, and a single villain; we try to keep to a single, basic viewpoint only because if we bring in more, we confuse the issue and the reader.. To duplicate is to dissipate the effect and we want to make the strongest possible "impact" on the reader.

Therefore, one can say that there are not any formulae except the universal and timeless one I have briefly summarized. And there are no rules than cannot be broken. A courageous and imaginative writer comes along, and—pouf, there is a story that does use animals in an extraordinary way. Or that makes the single viewpoint story, or the story in a story (flashback), look silly. Eugene O'Neil was a controversial author. He was rebellious of rules and trite forms. But his plays reflect the strength of a creative innovator. Generally, not always, he had some brilliant idea (either on the level of form or thought.) He was creative & imaginative.

But there lies the principle. In the very beginning he wrote some atrociously "hammy" plays. He wrote out of inexperience & weakness, not strength. Felix Salten was an artist. He weighed the values of tellings poetic story in his own way. He took a calculated risk. The amateur only knows he can't tell a story, and he blunders, breaks rules.

REWRITE

NEW BOOKS FOR WRITERS

THE ART OF FICTION. An Introduction: to Ten Novels and Their Authors. W. Somerset Maugham. Doubleday & Co. \$4.50. Again, Somerset Maugham has revised and enlarged an earlier piece of his writing. It can be seriously a matter of public question whether an author who alleges he has "retired", serves either the best interests of himself or the general public by this refurbishing and repricing of his earlier wares.

STANFORD SHORT STORIES. Ed. Wallace Stegner & Richard Scowcroft. The 9th annual edition of these stories written in a creative class. Good material for inexperienced writers who wish to think about their craftsmanship.

VICTOR HERBERT. Edward N. Waters. The Macmillan Co. \$8.50. A serious biography which is excellently annotated with chapter notes & a full index. Herbert was more than a writer of successful musical plays. His life touched symphonic music, opera and operettas and he knew or was associated with many publically famous personalities. This is a rich & valuable stockpile for research.

SUPERSTITIOUS? HERE'S WHY. Julie F. Batchelor & Claudia de Lys. Harcourt, Brace & Co... \$2.25. Neatly classified by subject, popular and unfamiliar superstitions are here listed, discussed and traced to their origin in the worlds of myth and folklore. A useful compendium. Julie is a member of the WCS Family. She has another book due in the fall.

TERROR IN THE MODERN VEIN. Ed. Donald A. Wollheim. Hanover House. \$3.95. Seventeen yarns prefaced by a discussion of the past & present of what the editor calls "Fear" fiction. Mr. Wollheim, a successful pulp editor, has contributed one short short of his own, and the range of authors includes H.G. Wells, H. P. Lovecraft, Franz Kafka and other notable writers. The copyright credit lines indicate where these writers published these stories. (See comment on this story form on P. 15.)

COMMUNISM, CONFORMITY, AND CIVIL LIBERTIES. By Samuel A. Stouffer. Doubleday & Co. \$4.00. This is a poll of the opinions of 6,500 average and leading Americans on a variety of subjects. The idea of freedom of thought and word and deed and feeling is vitally important. Polls, however, have been drastically mistaken in the past. And I for one don't believe 6,500 persons adequately represent an accurate picture of how 160-million others, in this nation, or any other, really feel & think. It is projection in terms of Time and Space and Human fallibility, not to mention the opportunities for immediate change that amounts to scientific fiction.

HOW TO WRITE FOR TELEVISION. Ed. William I. Kaufman. Hastings House. \$2.50. A lot of big TV names are represented here. The style is rather slangy and cynical. But there is much helpful information, if you are willing patiently to dig for it. Only 94 pages.

BOOKS OF GENERAL INTEREST

ATOMS FOR PEACE. David O. Woodbury. Dodd, Mead & Co. \$3.50. An experienced scientific reporter has pieced together and correlated the data that makes this often used phrase, a newspaper cliché, meaningful and exciting to the well informed as well as the layman. In simple, easily understandable words David O. Woodbury spells out the mystery & the significant possibilities of the atom for a peaceful world. Writers who wish to be familiar with tomorrow's miracles, should read and digest it.

(Dave Woodbury is one of the numerous big-name authors, editors and agents scheduled, in July, to serve as staff at the 1st Annual Clark University Writers' Conference, of which Bill is Chairman.)

EVERYGIRLS ROMANCE STORIES. Ed. A. L. Furrman. Lantern Press. \$2.50. A dozen short stories reprinted from various Sunday School & lay magazines. One is by Frances Durland, a member of the WCS Family. Good reading, and an opportunity for writers to study successful samples in the teen age field.

BETTY STARLING, PRIVATE SECRETARY. Audrey Turner. Lantern Press. \$2.50. A book-length romance of the career type. Again, wholesome entertainment for teen age girls.

AMIGO, CIRCUS HORSE. Page Cooper. The World Publishing Co. \$2.50. Really this is a story about Franz, a circus boy who loves Amigo, a circus horse. Another of Page Cooper's well written and charming stories for children about horses. She has written 3 others and a number of adult books. She knows the world of horses and she knows story-telling. She started writing publicity for Doubleday & Co.

THE CASE FOR THE UFO. M.K. Jessup. The Citadel Press. \$3.50. About flying saucers, the author has padded out with chapters on most of the meteors, fireballs, disappearing objects (including planes, ships, etc.) He's even got the famous story of the "Marie Celeste," the ship that was found drifting and no explanation of where the crew had disappeared to! The book therefore, more nearly, it seems, is devoted to the "study of the unexplained areas of human existence". This means psychic and spiritual phenomena.

WHEELS. A Pictorial History. Edwin Tunis.. The World Publishing Co. An entertaining and lavishly illustrated oversize volume, which gives extensive visual and prose coverage of one of man's most basic inventions.

NEWS IS A SINGULAR THING. Marguerite Higgins. Doubleday & Co. \$3.50. The kind of a book a reporter (at least a Pulitzer Prize-winning correspondent type) can write when she takes a day off to look back at memories and day-to-day file of clippings. This is "feature-stuff" of a high order. Intensely readable. History and news and glamor that's genuine!

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WCS PERSONALITIES IN THE NEWS

Mildred Mikkonen, Worcester GAZETTE women's page reporter and columnist, has been raised to Women's News Editor. She plans to continue the interview column she does each Sunday in the Worcester TELEGRAM Feature Parade.

Gladys E. Hague, a member of Bill's Creative Writing class at Clark University, had the lead article recently in the TELEGRAM'S Feature Parade section.

Mrs. Edith F. Osteyee received a splendid and well deserved tribute from the new staff of The COMPASS, Bulletin of the Christian Authors' Guild, both of which she originated. The point was made that in six years Christian Authors' Guild graduated over 110 writers, who average at least 50 published mss. a year. They prove Mrs. Osteyee was thorough and sought quality rather than quantity.

Helen McCarthy, a Groton neighbor of ours and member of the WCS Family, is doing a library column (a good one!) for the Ayer, Concord and Groton papers. She free lances too.

Mrs. Naomi Ingalls, has received a Certificate of Merit for Outstanding Garden Journalism from the National Garden Bureau.

Mrs. Sarah Weld Blake, almost a "charter" member of the WCS Family, scored a deserved triumph and received an exciting thrill recently when she witnessed the first performance of her play (a full length one, laid in Anglo-Saxon times) in the Johns Hopkins University Drama Playshop's new auditorium. The largest audience in 33 years, she reports... Perhaps the most satisfying aspect of it for writers is that Sarah Blake, who has worked on this play for many years and has believed in it, is over 80 years old. We are very happy for her.

Quentin R. Howard, a social-science teacher, is also a correspondent and stringer for the HERALD-ADVERTISER, Huntington, West Va., from Pikeville, Ky. It was his high school, incidentally, that was featured on CBS-TV & then promptly burned and was featured again in LIFE! He has published in many southern & small magazines.

Peggie Schulz shushed me down for referring to her in the March issue as "Mrs. Margaret"! A momentary brain lapse. "Peggie", we should add, is her professional writing, as well as friendly, name. And under it yet another in a now long list of books will be published in the fall: "How to Grow Plants Under Fluorescent Light". How's that for a title!

Florence M. Davis has joined the WCS Family's growing number of juvenile serialists. I have continually advised promising writers of children's short fiction to stretch their story-telling ability to include serials. It means a check in three figures instead of two. Some have earned \$300 and then got a book!

HOW TO USE A "GIMMICK"

Bill Vinton, member of the WCS Family, had an interesting article in one of the papers for farmers recently that applies to writers who free lance. He called it "Have you got a Gimmick? It dealt with the added opportunities you can build if you save regularly unexpected windfalls that are not really part of your usual income.

His idea was that these savings should be converted into capital, and then this could be used to finance improved equipment, travel, new or unusual experience or research—all of which might eventually return larger or new sources of income. I was particularly struck with the example of one "gimmick" he developed by "giving" part of his spare-time hours to rehabilitating an old orchard that had been abandoned. In ten years or so this unpaid work returned him \$1350 in produce he sold plus food his family ate. And he got at least one article out of it!

Destiny works in strange ways. Sometimes, the work that a writer feels he is "giving" away free, or he believes is beneath the dignity of a professional, leads on to a great opportunity. I have seen it happen too many times not to believe that where a writer in faith and trust gives of his knowledge, experience and enthusiasm (his desire to share with others, or get a good job done) he will get something back. It may not be what he's expecting, but it will be what he can use.. "No experience is ever lost."

But let not any vanity publisher use this thought as a convenient argument that writers should rush their early practice pieces and fumbling first attempts to write into a badly printed book. There have been rare instances where writers believing in a dream, have gone on to fame from books they printed themselves. But nowhere, even today, will one find any record of professional authors later emerging from the shoddy, over-priced volumes that vanity and "subsidy" publishing firms palm off on writers too naive to note their own unreadiness for publication.

MR. MARQUAND TALKS ON THE NOVEL

John P. Marquand was quoted in a Christian Science Monitor interview (Feb. 17, 1955) that revealed some interesting ideas on the subject of novel writing. He thinks the new young writers must be judged on the basis of several books, not one spectacular success. He considers too many of them overly pessimistic. He'd like to see them more positive in their thinking and comments.

"Don't misunderstand me," he said. I don't think a writer should sit down with a great sense of responsibility, with a feeling that he is going to write a novel that is going to change the world, or that he is a sort of self-appointed ambassador for the UN.

"If he does that he is not being a novel-

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ist, he is a feature writer or a propagandist. Art and a great sense of social responsibility don't mix."

He also does not believe "anybody tries to write satire in fiction. If you sat down and said, 'Now I am going to write a satire,' you would make rather a mess of it." His idea of a novel is a work that will "enfold" the reader, and permit him to "walk in imagination with the people of an artificial, but very real world, sharing their joys and sorrows, understanding their perplexities."

"In most people's lives," Mr. Marquand continued, "success and defeat are pretty closely balanced. I like to think that up to this point or that, one can control a situation." His novels depict therefore, the factors he sees as limiting this control.

It is interesting, I think to notice that Mr. Marquand and Esther Forbes express substantially the same general thought. (See: P. 10.) This merely confirms what so many of us have learned to expect at writers' sessions on the summer conference circuit. The great writers, editors and creative teachers disagree often in phrasing and details but not in principles of fundamentals of technique.

Write It Yourself

"The most valuable thing, I believe, that the beginning writer can obtain from any writing course is an increase in his power over words, in his ability to make them do his bidding, and this can most readily be gained by concentration upon the fundamentals of writing, without any special regard for the form in which they are to be exercised. . . . In other words, our courses in 'creative writing' would do well to forget that hisalutin and misleading phrase and get down to brass tacks."

The quotation is from J. Donald Adams's *Speaking of Books* essay in the *New York Times* book-reviews section, March 13. Mr. Adams is not pleased with the term "creative writing," nor the narrowing of courses under it to fiction and poetry, and sometimes to drama. He thinks writers can be original in other fields: biography, history, criticism, the essay. But his main point is for the student to master words and their meanings as the tools of his work, as a carpenter masters his square.

Comment. The above offers some good ideas about writing from the *TIMES'* featured columnist and literary editor. As a teacher of writing who this past winter has taught one of those courses labelled "Creative Writing" (and for credit for the degree of B.S.) I've had some opportunity to gather experience & to reflect upon the matter. At its best the term "creative writing" distinguishes rather unsatisfactorily between factual writing and imaginative writing. Though many of us, who have been newspaper and magazine writers, resent a distinction which says that factual writing cannot be creative. At its worst the phrase is a catch-all and also meaningless.

One cannot disagree, however, with Adams' contention that imagination and professional skill in handling words is basic. And at WCS we have always taught the fundamentals. If you know these, you can write well, period!

THOUGHTS ON "A NOSE FOR NEWS"

It is always profitable to see the closeness and similarity of techniques in different professions. Thus, at the spring meeting of the *Wachusett Library Group*, where Bill & Elva represented the *Lunenburg Public Library*, there was a practical example of what newsworthiness is. It came in an interesting and helpful talk by Miss Alice Cushman, librarian of the notable *Fitchburg Youth Library*. She showed how a librarian can increase the circulation of books by relating books to a news-peg or popular fad. That is, of course, exactly what the feature article writer has to do.

Miss Cushman started with the universally popular *Davy Crockett* story and record. She showed how *James Bowie*, inventor of the famous knife, *Chief Crazy Horse*, Custer's horse and even unusual desert animals, are topical subjects related to the present fad. And she added significantly, "Were you ready?" How many eager-beaver free lances took advantage of the curiosity in frontier legends & hero tales.

She devoted considerable time to describing how with a little expenditure of energy almost anyone can spot the shadows that the coming news-pegs often cast before them. The current *Hans Anderson* anniversary is one of these, and it is being taken deliberate advantage of by an important movie release. A basic strategy is to think ahead of readers and to capitalize on perimeter subjects and what she termed "good things".

Miss Cushman made one direct reference to writers. She told how one free lance writer sought her out for an interview on the damaging effects of radio and TV on good reading. He was seeking to make use of a souped up controversy. But she retorted that to her mind this was a negative subject. She feels that many radio, TV and movie shows rouse a curiosity in books about the themes handled in the shows. Librarians and writers should take advantage of this curiosity. They can stimulate it and "sell" books or articles & ride the wave's crest.

Of course, for writers this requires fore knowledge and also an ability to send a message to the most likely place at the right time. That is why agents cannot entirely take over selling problems. A writer has got gradually to accumulate information on how editors plan their issues in advance; how long ahead they buy, and how, individually, their minds work. You cannot always be right, but good timing is often the secret of a sale.

Miss Cushman spoke about the often disregarded opportunity. On rainy days she drops books about *Rain* on tables where browsers in the library will see them. Writers can very easily capitalize that way, too. On one occasion I recall two members of the *WCS Family* published articles on such a homely subject as *Salt* within a month of each other!

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HOW CRITICS CAN HELP WRITERS

A great many writers dream of an agent who will take the job of selling their wares off of their hands and let them devote time entirely to writing. That is an admirable and desirable dream. But it is a dream, because the sad commentary is that many of these ambitious writers have not learned to write in a professional manner. Or if they have, they slip up on the strategy of organizing their ideas or topic. Here at WCS we have helped a lot of writers to sell specific mss. to the same editor who rejected them earlier. And often the author earns a letter from the editor, who remarks that he has rarely seen so good a job of revision.

Here are the basic fundamental principles involved in the matter of agents. There is a large body of writers (probably the majority of would-be writers) who are simply outside the class who can be helped by agents. They do not produce enough material regularly, or their \$10 and \$25 checks are so small that an agent would lose money working trying to earn the \$1 or \$2.50 commissions they would bring him. They would not even pay for the postage and clerical expenses, let alone his time in reading them and thinking about potential markets for them.

But there is another angle. When you have got up to the point where you are selling a story or article for \$500 (commission \$50,) you still have to think in terms of salability. You must make the ms. practical for an editor or group of readers. The agent if he is a good one, (not a critic-agent who earns most of his income telling writers that the ms. they have submitted is good, but needs a little fixing by his staff for an additional fee) can tell you where he can sell it; & his knowledge and experience is greater than yours or ours. But if the ms. is a trifle away from the target (off-trail), he usually cannot, and does not try to tell you, except in general terms, how to revise it.

The astonishing thing about this business of writing and selling is that there is the place for creative critic and coach, the man with the experience and know-how to help an author to make his mss. ready for an agent, or editor. But there is only a handful of us specializing on a professional level of integrity and full time practice. Few advertise; most work largely through agents, and editors, who know their ability and recommend them to writers.

Most writers, even professionals, are ignorant of the usefulness such specialists can provide. They never think in terms of using them to the full extent that is possible or advisable. Let me cite a few examples which have recently come to our attention. An author, in fact several of them, with a string of books published to her credit, told us about a book she was having trouble with. In each case the individual author waited till

the book was rejected by the editor who had accepted most of the previous ones. Then she consulted us. In one such case, I worked on the outline with the author as it developed chapter by chapter, but I was not permitted to read the ms. as it was written. (In several other instances I read the ms., but on the rewrite the author worked alone. Then I read the completed draft.)

Naturally, in all such variations of a basic pattern, it is harder to bail writer out of trouble after he gets into it, than if he allowed us to anticipate the trouble. (And, not unreasonably, it sometimes costs an author more in the long run. This is because a critic's time is valuable and he must charge for it. But if he is allowed to survey what the problem is, he can often use that valuable time to better advantage for the client and thus save him money over the long haul.

A case in point. A writer wrote us about a ms. that was being held by one editor while another wished to look at it. What to do? A simple suggestion was made that the editor, who was reading the ms., be informed politely of the added interest in the ms. She was asked not to hurry her reading, but to visualize the author's position. The diplomatic letter by the author not only won grateful appreciation from the editor, but an acceptance with the proviso that if the writer thought she could get more from the second editor, she was free to try it. Now we reasoned that if the author withdrew her ms. before editor A made a decision, she might, conceivably, antagonize A and get only her ms. back from editor B. As it was she made money and a friend at editor A's office, and B is more anxious than ever to see the writer's next ms. of this length. And our fee was only a very nominal one. If on the other hand the author had got two rejections then asked our advice, we would have needed to read and think about the ms. Our fee would have been many times larger, and the author having in her first unsuccessful bid killed two possible markets, might have prevented any sale.

Appreciating some of these considerations, quite a few writers work with us closely or even show us everything they write before it is submitted to editors or the agent. In one such case, the first two mss., which chanced to be follow-ups of previous sales, appeared to be certain sales. Yet we were able to indicate almost sure reasons why they'd probably have been rejected. By eliminating this chance for a rejecting, we made money above our fee for our client.

This is the most important aspect of this problem. For the inexperienced writer we do a teaching job. But for the professional author we increase his rate of payment. When he sells an editor on the first submission, not the second or third, the editor pays him a higher word rate. I have seen this happen repeatedly. Preventive counsel is valuable. Some agents recognize this & call in critics

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as part of the three-cornered team. Author, critic, agent. Some writers see the point & protect their earnings. It should be done a great deal more.

And of course some way should be found to prevent the many incompetent and unreliable critic-agents who advertise lavishly in the writers' magazines and elsewhere from horn-ing in for the purpose of exploiting would-be and minor league professional writers.

A start could be made if some of the bet-ter non-advertising agencies would seek out and have on their staffs persons of ability and integrity, who could advise their border-line clients, or even their regular clients who occasional miss the target with an off-trail or ambitious artistic effort. In time the level of American magazine writing might be raised to a much higher level with no loss of reader appeal.

THE FICTION WORKSHOP

Perhaps because the Fiction Workshop's as-signment last time was crowded into a three-line, back-page mention, only four tried it out. Each writer was to make his own assign-ment. A new-comer, Mrs. Geraldine M. Tolles, did a honey of a little sketch, "Is There a Real Santa Claus?" It poses the usual prob-lem of a story that may be on two levels of interest (for children and adults) and bob-bles a bit between the two. But my guess, she will sell it.

Two minor details: some of her dialogue is really monologue. The child should draw his mother out with easy, natural questions in-stead of listening to a monologue. Dialogue also should never be double paragraphed. It is confusing to the reader. Let the charac-ters alternate, one each other.

Jac Tweton came in with a "cute" sketch, a 2-pager. (It is hard to make characters be-come real in so short a space and tell a plot also.) One trouble was the story stopped as the author flashed back momentarily. Another was that the title, "The Third Step," oth-erwise a good one, was not immediately obvi-ous as to what it implied. Like many young-er writers Miss Tweton needs practice to get sureness of touch, inevitability, as Elva's told the poets, so a m. says what it means & says it with precision and authority.

Florence S. Anderson hurt an interesting, factual article by trying to dramatize it & tell it in story form...Ora Lee Partheaus, trying the difficult idea for a story about a woman grieving at having to kill a pet hen, did not quite make us feel as the MC did.

Next Workshop Assignment. Do this again by sending me one of your shorter stories or a problem that is bothering you. I will write about them. This is one of the best, & most practical ways I can help a lot of you. So help me to help you. And next time Elva and I will have two conferences to talk about.

NEWS AT WCS HOUSE

This spring has been a busy one for us at WCS House. Elva's been giving quite a bunch of her Poetry Programs. Bill has completed a full course for credit in the "Creative Writ-ing" class he has been teaching at Clark U-niversity. He has also been extremely busy, planning and preparing for the Writers' Con-ference at Clark (July 14/16). As we went to press the first registrations had begun ar-riving, with many more promised.

In April we represented Lunenburg's Public Library at the all-day Wachusett Library Group Conference at which our old friend, Esther Forbes, spoke. Later, Bill's class adjourn-ed to hear her talk informally to the Human-ities Club at Clark. Late in May Bill & Elva were interviewed and then "taped" on the Julie and Johnny show on WTAG in Worcester on be-half of the Conference. Elva is also to get interviewed again (July 10th) in Mildred Mc-kenen's Sunday TELEGRAM Feature Parade col-umn, again for the Conference.

Many mss., including an 808-page novel of the Custer era, have kept both of us on the double. So busy our fun time in the garden, in this, one of the best growing seasons of the six we have been in Lunenburg, has been restricted. However, all of our apple, peach cherry trees and other flowering shrubs have been a dream of beauty. We have great hopes for bumper crops in our small garden.

SOME MORE PRIZE CONTESTS

The Poets' Study Club of Terre Haute, Mab-el Skeen, 454 S. 12th St., Terre Haute, Ind., is offering \$5, \$3, & \$2 for poems (two mss. not over 16 lines from each writer). Ser-ious or humorous. Closes: July 15th.

Maclean's, 481 University Ave., Toronto., Ont., Canada, is offering \$5,000 for novels by Canadians, or with Canadian settings. No closing date.

Vermont Development Commission, Montpel-ier, Vt. offers prizes for photographs taken in Vermont. Four seasonal contests, says the AUTHOR & JOURNALIST (May issue).

Central City Opera House Association, 1502 Cleveland Place, Denver 2, Colo., offers an award of \$10,000 for a romantic play, based on the discovery of gold in Colorado. Closes on July 1, 1957!

PEN MONEY, A. D. Freese & Sons, Upland, Ind. This is an excellent market source for fill-er markets and prize awards. \$1 per year. In the current issue the lead article is signed by Helen Langworthy, active member of the WCS Family.

The Long Beach Writers' Club (Calif.) now has 30 subscriptions to REWRITE in effect. A club like this one can benefit its members, by using our Duplicate Subscription plan. A number of subscriptions being sent in bulk.

CURRENT PRIZE CONTESTS

Korn Contest, 1955, Lane Van Hook, 154 Pearsall Drive, Mt. Vernon, N.Y., offers "a \$100 cash prize for the best poem, to honor N. Y. State Poetry Day. Not over 32 lines, a subject selected by the author. Submit poem (one only) anonymously in triplicate. Deadline: Oct. 1, 1955.

MODERN ROMANCES, Henry P. Malmgreen, Dell Publishing Co., 261 5th Ave., NYC 16, has an incentive system contest for Confession stories. Runs all year with pay-offs the end of April, Aug. & Dec., according to points run up. \$7,000 in addition to regular sales. Be sure to write for rules and study the book!

Annual Swallow Poetry Book Award, Alan Swallow, 2679 So. York St., Denver 10, Colo, offers \$250 (\$50 advance on royalties). (No restriction, except juveniles not accepted. Poets who have not published books are urged to try the New Poetry Series Award first, which closes Jan. 1st annually.) Closes: Oct. 1st annually.

Child Security, Inc., 1836 Cimarron St., Los Angeles 19, Cal., offers \$3,000 for the best "standard textbook on the subject of & about Psycho Genesis, which can be supplied to teachers and students in groups. Closes: August 1, 1955."

Wilcox & Follett, 1255 South Wabash Ave., Chicago 5, Ill. There is still time to submit a book-length children's ms., fiction or non-fiction, in this \$3,000 prize award contest. No restrictions. Two age groups: 8 to 12, and 12 to 16 years. Write immediately for entry blank.. Closes: July 1, 1955.

SOME MARKET NOTES

The center box on this page indicates clearly one type of poetry ms. the editors of the Catholic Poetry Society of America magazine do not want.

Writers should be alert for such expressions of opinion & editorial requirements. Editors are often appearing at a trade meeting, or occasionally are interviewed. And while these published remarks sometimes are "off the cuff", and do not reflect official policies, they are an accurate or interesting straw in the wind that writers should file away in their minds or notebooks.

LONG ISLAND SUBURBAN, Alice Dember, 34 Polo Rd., Massapequa, N. Y., was extensively reported in The WRITER (May) as interested in good "suburban" features from free-lancers. Look it up.

IDEAS FOR JUVENILE WRITERS

Some sound hints for writers of juveniles were offered by Carolyn Emerson, the speaker of the evening at a recent dinner of the Worcester Branch of the National League of American Pen Women. She is in charge of education for children at Sturbridge Village & she has worked for the Walt Disney studios. She said that an unspecified editor offered as her two tests of the ms. she read these two criteria: "(1) if they interest me, they'll probably interest the children; (2) style: if it does not nauseate me, I start to study it seriously for possible acceptance.")

Miss Emerson said that for herself tangible details that a child can understand, are very important. Elaborating, she explained, illustrating with a Mayan story she wrote, a principle she practices. She tries to write her stories so that what you might call the gimmick will function in the child's life. A serpent's head so big one could climb in it, topped a tower of an ancient castle which she explored.

She wanted to make this function in young lives. But how? Then she heard about a terrific hail storm. She made it a part of her story. The children were forced to discover some shelter in a hurry. Why of course, the serpent's head. This enabled her child readers to visualize the ancient Mayan scene in a vivid, but entirely natural manner.

A TRADE WRITERS' MARKET DIRECTORY

HOUSE MAGAZINE DIRECTORY. Norman B. Wake—man, ed. dir. Gebbie Press... \$19.95. A very efficient listing of statistical data & editorial requirements of more than 3,000 leading house organ magazines. This is a specialized, business-type field of which a majority of free lance writers know little or nothing. Some of the better known automobile magazines, such as FORD TIMES, are the limit of their experience. Yet many of these publications buy specialized & general material including photographs carefully slanted their way. This book is expensive but useful. It is issued every two years. One feature sale can pay for it. And it is well worth a place on your reference shelf, or that of your local public library. Certainly business writers will find it invaluable. A Writers' Book Club Selection.

Inexpensive Market (Special) Lists. We are often asked about these. For 25¢ you can get the most reliable ones from: The WRITER, 8 Arlington St., Boston 16, Mass. Specify which you want.

Don't, Don't Shoptalk

The editors of SPIRIT have been somewhat bewildered by manuscripts which can roughly be put in the category of Shoptalk. One of the worst forms of this type occurs when the aspiring poet attempts to write a poem whose subject-matter is his inability to write poetry! How anyone can think that this theme developed in no matter how perfect versification can interest the general reader is the mystery which bewilders our readers.

Another type is that which is in effect a discussion on how a poem is constructed. Such a discussion might appropriately find place in a poets' work group but should it be advanced in such a setting, one can be certain the medium would be prose and not versification. The hard fact is that the general public poetry reader wants a poem not talk about how one comes into existence or even about the nature of poetry itself.

A third type, which overlaps the second, is to explain what poetry is by using a succession of comparisons, whether similes or metaphors.

SPIRIT is inevitably negative on manuscripts that fall into this category and their writers can save themselves and the editors time by refraining from forwarding them to SPIRIT.

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MURDER IS FUN AND GOOD PRACTICE

It is often said that the mystery story, a specialized type of fiction, is an excellent one for the inexperienced writer to use for practice. This may seem strange to the casual reader, but there are some good reasons for it. For one thing, market-wise it's the most generally salable to a broad cross-section of markets of any type except the love story. Again, it is almost pure unadulterated entertainment. It requires no deep themes or individualized characterization, both of which are difficult for the young writer. A line of interest is also essential; that is very good for the beginning writer, because it teaches him to put movement, continuity, and logic into his story.

Most of all, the mystery story forces the author to develop his plotting instinct. It has been said that the mystery story is almost 100% carpentry. To some extent this is true. But it combines primitive suspense and sophisticated story-telling. It emphasizes, and demands effective story-telling, yet at the same time requires the writer to do the most difficult thing for many serious folk, to tease the reader and fool him by legitimate means. To a certain extent you have to treat your story as serious business & also take it lightly, treat it as a game, a duel of thinking between the reader and the person who does the work. This is wonderful experience.

You start with a basic cast of chessmen: a murderer, a corpse, the police and a detective. In other words, it is that oldest and most fascinating spectacle, a manhunt. You have a man fleeing, the police chasing, and a sleuth trying to discover who the man is. It is more than a simple chase. It involves ultimately more factors than the basic four characters. For there are more than one potential murderer. The reader must eliminate and guess. The most important part of writing a mystery is not the underlying line of interest, but rather the covering of it up.

Many writers think that if they just confuse the issue, they have written a mystery story. They haven't. The simplest, most obvious murder is often the most baffling because any one of several persons could have done it. No, it is not mere complication or a crowd of possible gunmen, or even the bizarre weapon that makes experienced mystery fans read on. It is rather the neat balancing of forces, the juxtaposition of motives and the impossibility of ferreting out that illusive killer.

The mystery story thus represents a dual, two-tone type of story, which is a splendid kind of practice for writers in any field of writing. For there is not only the story on stage that must be constantly unrolled, and controlled. The line of interest that ought to be continuous and plausible throughout a story. But there is also that duel with the

reader. There is the steady, unrelenting, & entertaining conflict of two forces outside the story: the author vs. the reader.

I have frequently referred to the two-way emotional relations between the characters, all of them, in a story. It is only as such relations are adequately understood & filled in that any story becomes firm and well-rounded. As authors we tend to identify our interest solely with the MC. We dismiss the other characters as mere nuisances and necessary evils. We do not realize nearly to the degree we should that the story involves an inescapable conflict between the two forces we set up in a story. And we cannot naturally bring this to full fruition unless every character takes part; unless we identify as fully with the other characters as we do in the case of the MC.

All that is pretty rudimentary. But mystery stories raise the same issue outside a story, too. They demand that the author has to understand the two-way relationship that he shares with the reader. He must hold the reader's attention with a story, of course. He must create suspense and make the reader wonder about the situation. But he is forced to engage in a duel of wits with his reader. He must give the latter all the promising clues, but still out-think him to the end.

Let me illustrate. The author has through the entire story the task of saying to himself: "Now at this point the reader will be thinking that Mary did it. At least, I have tried to make him believe that preposterous lie. Well, does my 'case' hold water? Will he have seen through the motivating reasons I have built up so carefully proving this is certainly so? If the reader is skeptical of this, how am I to divert his attention?" It is excellent experience for the writer to be forced to think about the truth and the consequences of his every scene. It may be irritating or nerve-wracking, but it matures, strengthens his craftsmanship and makes him a better all around writer.

There is another terrifying implication to this line of thought. The experienced reader of many mysteries can just by reading the list of characters of many stories, tell at a glance who is the most likely murderer. A writer is not going to have a minor or sympathetic character do it. Therefore, by the process of elimination the reader can "narrow down" and not have to read the book.

Not all mysteries are played straight. The emphasis may be on Detection, Adventure, or Horror. Or the story may be primarily Character or Psychological in its basic appeal. There are other variations, but whatever you choose, it is best to make your effect clean and sharp. Finally you can have a lot of fun if you develop interesting clues, make your suspense steadily progressive, continually, steadily tightening. And if you bring fresh craftsmanship to the old trite situations.